United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/901
31 May 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General proposes that compensation to be paid by Iraq for damages caused by its invasion and occupation of Kuwait should not exceed 30 per cent of annual value of export of petroleum products from Iraq.

- Secretary-General in Lisbon to witness signing of Angola accords; holds talks with Angolan President, Chairman of Organization of African Unity, Soviet Foreign Minister, United States Secretary of State, UNITA President.

- United Nations Spokesman says efforts to maintain international relief in Ethiopia and surrounding countries are continuing despite difficult situation in country.

- Economic and Social Council authorizes Subcommission on Minorities to use secret ballot on question of alleged human rights violation.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar announced today, through his Spokesman, that the compensation to be paid by Iraq for damages caused by its invasion and occupation of Kuwait -- as stipulated by Security Council resolution 687 (1991) -- should not exceed 30 per cent of the annual value of the exports of petroleum and petroleum products from Iraq.

By the resolution, the Secretary-General was asked to undertake the appropriate consultations so that he could suggest to the Council such a figure as soon as possible.

In his statement, the Secretary-General said that authoritative data necessary for the preparation of the communication to the Council were not readily available. However, given that Iraq derived almost its entire exports earnings from the export of oil and that the unit price and export volume of its oil were monitored by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), it was possible to estimate the size and functioning of its economy in general and of its external trade and payments in particular.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

The Council stated in resolution 687 that Iraq is "liable under international law for any direct loss, damage -- including environmental damage and the depletion of international resources -- or injury to foreign Government, national and corporations as a result of Iraq's unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait". It further said that the liability was without prejudice to the debts and obligations of Iraq arising prior to 2 August 1990, which would be addressed "through the normal mechanisms".

* * *

The Secretary-General, who is in Lisbon today, held a series of meetings with the Angolan authorities; the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union; and President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda, Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Later today, the Secretary-General was scheduled to meet the Secretary of State of the United States, James A. Baker III. He was then scheduled to attend the ceremony of the signing of the agreement on Angola, in which he would participate as a witness.

The Secretary-General's first meeting this morning was with the President of Angola, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, with whom he discussed the Angola accords and reviewed the details of the United Nations role in its implementation. They also discussed the emergency assistance plan for Angola and the need to promote the economic reconstruction of the country.

The Secretary-General also discussed the United Nations role in the implementation of the agreement at his meeting with the President of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi.

At noon, the Secretary-General met with Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh of the Soviet Union. They reviewed a number of regional questions, including the agreement on Angola, the question of Afghanistan, the Iraq-Kuwait issue and the situation in the Middle East.

In the afternoon, the Secretary-General met with President Museveni of Uganda, with whom he discussed the implementation of the Angolan agreements and cooperation between the United Nations and OAU in the implementation of the Western Sahara plan.

Following his meeting with President dos Santos this morning, the Secretary-General told the press that the importance of the agreement to be signed later today was in its implementation. He expressed the hope that the parties had taken the political decision to fulfil the agreement, since "without an atmosphere of confidence, good faith and political will", the agreement would not be relevant.

* * *

(more)

Efforts to maintain international relief in Ethiopia and surrounding countries were continuing despite the difficult situation on the ground, according to the United Nations Spokesman today.

He told correspondents today that even before the most recent political developments in Ethiopia, the relief-supply pipeline had been thin and stocks were dwindling. Some supply routes had now been completely cut off and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had reported that food stocks in camps, particularly cereals, were nearly exhausted. The UNHCR had also reported that 150,000 people were crossing from Ethiopia into the Sudan, creating a further strain on the Government's ability to cope with an already difficult situation in that part of the country.

The Spokesman said Under-Secretary-General James Jonah, currently in Nigeria awaiting the opening of the OAU summit next week, had consulted with Foreign Ministers of the Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia -- countries bordering on Ethiopia which are affected by the recent outflows of refugees.

In a related development, it was announced today that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, would fly to Nigeria tomorrow to consult with African leaders, the Secretary-General and other humanitarian organizations on an immediate, consolidated response to the crisis. A UNHCR press release issued today reported that the security situation was particularly precarious in eastern Ethiopia where food convoys have been attacked, hijacked and looted.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has reported that it has sent a convoy of relief supplies to areas in and around the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. The agency said a Soviet surgical team had received 300 wounded citizens in the past two days and had operated on almost 250 of them. Despite the high level of tension, ICRC staff had been working continuously to evacuate the wounded to the main hospital in the capital.

* * *

The Economic and Social Council has authorized the use of secret balloting in the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on questions of alleged human rights violations by countries.

The authorization to allow the use of secret balloting, when a majority of the Subcommission's members chose to do so was contained in one of many resolutions and decisions on human rights issues adopted this morning by the Council. The secret ballot is customarily used by United Nations bodies only in elections.

In all, the Council approved 12 resolutions and 35 decisions submitted for its approval by the Commission on Human Rights; the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the Council's Second (Social) Committee.

(more)

Among the issues covered by the resolutions were: calls to maintain sanctions against South Africa pending the total dismantlement of the apartheid system; a request to appoint a special rapporteur on violations of human rights by the Government of Iraq; the preparation of a handbook of recourse procedures for victims of racial discrimination; and the organization of an expert seminar on indicators to measure achievements in the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. Other issues concerned torture and child prostitution.

* *** *